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ABSTRACT

This study examined middle school students' perceptions of maternal employment, as a function of their gender and type of school environment (suburban vs. urban). A four-part survey, which included information about the respondents' mother's work status, the Beliefs About Consequences of Maternal Employment for Children (BACMEC) scale, and Rosenberg's Self-Concept scale, as well as demographic information, was distributed to 53 male and 55 female middle school students in suburban and urban area schools. Independent t-tests were performed examining both the relationship between school type and gender variables on five dependent measures. The results indicated that statistically significant differences were present between suburban and urban students' perceptions of the benefits associated with their mothers' employment. Urban students perceived greater benefits associated with their mothers' working. In addition, significant differences were found in students' relationships with their fathers; suburban students regarded their relationship with their fathers more positively than urban students. Similarly, significant gender differences were also found. Female respondents perceived greater benefits from maternal employment than their male counterparts. Finally, female students rated the quality of their maternal relationships higher than male students. No significant differences were found in terms of students' perceptions of their relationships with their fathers, or in terms of self-esteem. (Contains 97 references.) (Author)

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Male and Female Middle School Students' Perceptions of Maternal Employment as a Function of Gender and School Environment

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Abstract

This study examined middle school students' perceptions of maternal employment, as a function of their gender and type of school environment (suburban vs. urban). A four-part survey, which included information about the respondents' mother's work status, the Beliefs About Consequences of Maternal Employment for Children (BACMEC) scale, and Rosenberg's Self-Concept scale, as well as demographic information, was distributed to 53 male and 55 female middle school students in suburban (n=56) and urban (n=52) area schools. Independent t-tests were performed examining both the relationship between school type and gender variables on five dependent measures.

The results indicated that statistically significant differences were present between suburban and urban students' perceptions of the benefits associated with maternal employment. Urban students perceived greater benefits associated with their mothers' working. In addition, significant differences were found in students' relationships with their fathers; suburban students regarded their relationships with their fathers more positively than urban students.

Similarly, significant gender differences were also found. Female respondents perceived greater benefits from maternal employment than their male counterparts. Finally, female students rated the quality of their maternal relationships higher than male students. No significant gender differences were found in terms of students' perceptions of their relationships with their fathers, or in terms of their self esteem.

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Introduction

In examining the attitudes toward maternal employment reported by middle school-aged children, several factors should be considered. The type of school environment they experience, gender differences, whether or not the children were placed into day care settings, the quality of parenting the children receive, the neighborhoods they are raised in, and the families' economic situation and family background are some of the factors that may affect attitudes toward maternal employment.

In addition, the amount of social support the mothers receive, especially in poor neighborhoods, may affect their stress level and hence their ability to effectively raise their children. There have also been some questions in reference to whether the age of the children when their mothers return to work has an effect on children's attitudes toward their mothers' working. Whether children are part of a single parent household, as well as the economic necessity of the mother's working, may all contribute to children's attitudes toward maternal employment.

Current research, such as the Haifa study (Sagi, Koren-Karie, Gini, Ziv, & Joels 2002) has examined which factors were more or less likely to produce a negative environment for baby/mother bonding. For example, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Early Child Care Study (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 1997) examined the influence on babies who are under the care of individuals other than their mothers and how that care affected the bonding between babies and their mothers. Their findings suggest that child-care itself was not shown to negatively or positively affect of babies' bonding to their mothers at age 15 months.

Babies who were in poor quality care environments, however, in excess of 10 hours per week, or in more than one day care setting during their first fifteen months, showed greater likelihood of apprehensive bonding, but only if their mothers were more likely to show low awareness to their babies' emotional needs.

In contrast, the Haifa study (Sagi et al, 2002) concluded that center related child-care negatively affected babies' bonding to their mothers when contrasted with maternal and other non-maternal types of care. It was noted, however, in the Haifa study, that this negative effect is most likely correlated with poor quality care and/or a low ratio of caregivers for a large number of infants and children. Standards set by the American Academy of Pediatrics, The American Public Health Association, and the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care (2002) suggests that the optimal ratio of children to caregiver is 3:1. The lowest, most favorable ratio of caregivers in the Haifa study was 6:1. Cautious interpretation of the effects of ratios on child bonding is necessary because ratio analysis is only one interpretation of the data. The issue of bonding involves multidimensional factors and, consequently, conclusions of ratio analysis should be considered in relation to other vital interpretations of the data for a more comprehensive examination (McCartney & Rosenthal, 2000; Lamb, 1998; Rosenthal, 1992; Tietze & Cryer, 1999).

The Haifa study (Sagi et al, 2002) took place in Israel, where children from all socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds are placed in the same center care facilities. This opportunity to perform the study in a more economically homogeneous environment helps to remove some of the uncertainty of the findings in relation to SES that had complicated analysis of some previous studies, (Galinsky, Howes, Kontos, & Shinn,

1994; Kontos, Howes, Shinn, & Gainsky, 1994) in which the SES sample was not as representative of the actual variety of SES that exists. It may however, complicate the applicability of these findings to other countries because of cultural differences. For example, avoidance bonding was rarely noted in Israeli babies, however, ambivalent bonding (Belsky & Rovine, 1988) was noted in the Israeli group (van Ijzendoorn & Sagi, 1999).

The Haifa study (2002) gathered a sample of 758 subjects. The variables, along with center care, that were examined were as follows: care from a relative, paid care from someone not related, family care, and maternal care. The researchers of this study theorized that correlation between a child care center and bonding ambivalence would remain even though the mother's awareness and possible problems with depression and consideration of the child's gender and disposition were analyzed separately from the child care center and bonding variables. The results confirmed this hypothesis.

The implemented procedure consisted of observation sessions where researchers watched the mother and child interact, which gave an indication of the mothers awareness of the child's emotional needs. The mothers also completed a self report about various factors pertaining to their interactions and environment with their babies. The babies' ambivalence was measured using the Strange Situation procedure (Ainsworth, & Wittig, 1969). Various questionnaires were used to help determine child temperament, marital satisfaction, and other issues that pertain to possible influences on a child's ability to successfully bond with their mother. A logic regression model was used to examine variability of controls as well as multivariate analysis of the data collected.

The collection of data from the Haifa study (Sagi et al, 2002) suggests that child care centers do have an effect on child/maternal bonding and further correlates with the findings of the NICHD study (1997), in suggesting that low ratio of adults in charge of a large number of babies, low quality of care, and mothers who are low on awareness of their children's emotional needs, may contribute to this effect. The researchers theorize that low level of education among center care workers may also contribute to infant bonding difficulties. Close to half of the center care workers surveyed in the Haifa study (2002) were not sufficiently trained in childcare.

In examining the past history of related research, the 1960's and 1970's studies reviewed did not uncover evidence of negative consequences in child and mother bonding (Belsky & Steinberg, 1978). The findings instead suggest that much of the past research has focused on day care centers of high quality, despite the evidence that high quality centers are not representative of the majority of care centers available (Belsky & Steinberg, 1978). Centers with high ratios of staff to children, and programs designed to encourage successful cognitive, intellectual and social development were not the norm. Research also indicates that some children were involved in other non parental care situations (National Childcare Consumer Study, 1975). Of the care centers that were assessed for quality, only 38% were deemed "good" and 50% of the day care centers were rated as "poor" (Keyserling, 1972).

The generalization of many studies on assessing the effects of day care have been questioned because many of them take place in laboratories or utilize standardized testing, neither of which has been shown to effectively generalize to the population from which the sample was obtained (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Lewis, 1973; Riegel, 1975;

Stroufe, 1970; Tulkin, 1972). In addition, although a substantial amount of research has been done, much of it has failed to address issues of center care's impact on society, children, and parents as seen from a human development perspective.

Belsky and Steinberg (1978) suggest that part of the limitation of these data is correlated with standardized testing being the prime or only measure of development both socially and intellectually. The reliability of these measures in determining intellectual and social status has been questioned (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Ginsburg and Koslowski, 1976; & McCall, 1977). Additionally, most of the research conducted thus far has focused on center care as it relates to the individual child.

The meta-analysis by Belsky and Steinberg (1978) reviewed 40 studies that were chosen based on the scientific quality of the research and utilization of measurements of high reliability in experimental trials, which gave researchers some control over possible confounds of these data.

The correlation of social development with child center care has focused on program curriculum offerings to foster children's establishment of appropriate relationships with their peers (Bronfenbrenner, 1970). One factor that has been overlooked, yet is important, is how the effects of day care impact adult-like socialization behaviors. Studies comparing non-day care versus day care children indicate that day care children tended to have greater peer orientation (Ricciuti, 1974; Kagan, 1976). A study performed by Cornelius and Denny (1975) suggest that gender differences were found in desire for close maternal proximity in certain situations with home reared children. Girls tended to remain closer to their mothers than their male counterparts, whereas, with day care children no such gender differences were found. The presence of

the children's caregivers tended to mediate the social differences between day care and non day care children of two years old. Both groups initiated interaction, and vocalized with peers at the same frequency and did not show significant differences in interactions (Finkelstein and Wilson, 1977).

Social differences between adolescents who had been reared in day care prior to 5 years of age, and those who were home reared, have shown that the adolescents previously enrolled in day care tended to be more sociable (Moore, 1975). Children 3-4 years old from the Syracuse Children's Center were studied in a series of panel observations in which they were measured on nine separate scales, both four and eight months after being enrolled in the day care program (Caldwell et al., 1970; Schwartz, Krolick & Strickland, 1973; Schwartz et al., 1974; Lay & Meyer1973). Significant differences were found on the scales measuring aggression (physical and verbal) and cooperation. These data indicated day care children were more aggressive and less cooperative than their non day care counterparts. Significant differences $p<.01$ were found, with home reared children having greater levels of tolerance when frustrated than day care children.

Belsky and Steinberg (1978) suggest that although these findings indicate certain differences in children, these differences may also be attributed to differences in quality of day care programs. Additionally, these differences may be in part attributed to the socialization that is representative of peer groups of various ages in American society (Bronfenbrenner, 1967, 1970a, 1970b; Garbarino & Bronfenbrenner 1976, Kav Venaki, Eyal, Bronfenbrenner, Kieley, & Caplan, 1976; Shouval, Kav Venaki, Bronfenbrenner, Devereux, & Kiely, 1975).

Studies performed based on cognitive issues have not shown many significant differences between children raised in day care versus home care (Caldwell et al., 1970; Cochran, 1977; Moore, 1975; Doyle & Somers; Kagan, Kearsley, and Zelazo, 1976; Fowler & Khan, 1975; Saunders, unpublished manuscript; Lewis, 1975; Prentice & Bieri, 1970) yet an overwhelming amount of these studies have been performed in high quality day care settings. For children who are economically less fortunate, however, day care has been shown to have a positive effect on counteracting the decline in standardized test scoring (Heber, Garber, Harrington, Hoffman, Falender, 1972; Robinson & Robinson, 1971).

Longitudinal studies on three groups of infants (Ramey & Smith, 1976; Ramey & Mills, 1975) examined the differences in high risk children who were part of a day care program specifically designed to cognitively enrich the children, a high risk home raised group, and a general population control group. Significant differences emerged between the two groups with the high risk day care children scoring higher than their high-risk home counterparts. These day care children were not shown to have significant differences from the general population group. A follow up study by Ramey and Campbell (1977) reported similar findings.

A large sample, multi-measure assessment study, the New York City Infant Day Care Study (Golden, Rosenbluth, Grossi, Policare, Freeman, & Brownlee, 1978), analyzed the results from a sample of approximately 400 children, scored on three measurement tests: the Bayley Mental Development Index (MDI) (Bayley, 1969), Stanford Binet (Terman, 1972), and Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Dunn, 1959). The results indicate that cognitive benefits to high-risk children may not solely be a function

of day care quality as differences mostly emerged between home care and day care but not between different day care programs. Steinberg and Green (1978) suggested that types of day care do have an effect on children's family units. The differences, however, may be attributed to the different affect the day care experience has on the children's mothers.

Much of the research done in the area of mother-infant attachment is measured using Ainsworth and Wittig's "strange situation" experimentation (Ainsworth, & Wittig, 1969). Concern as to the ability of this measurement to assess the actual attachment of the child to the mother is called into question because these situations are observed in laboratory environments and may not represent situations that children would naturally be exposed to (Belsky and Steinberg, 1978; Stroufe & Waters, 1977).

The research pertaining to differences in emotional security of children in day care versus home care is contradictory. Studies have shown results that suggest evidence of better attachment in home care (Blehar 1974; Ricciuti, 1974; Cochran, 1977). Other data supports better results in attachment with day care groups (Moskowitz, Schwartz, & Corsini, 1977; Doyle & Somers). Many of the studies have failed to show significant differences between home and day care groups (Brookhart & Hock, 1976; Doyle, 1975; Roopnarine & Lamb, 1978; Portnoy & Simmons, 1978).

The most comprehensive study examined in the review by Belsky and Steinberg (1978) included a diverse sampling of 32 pairs of children who were matched for gender, ethnic background, and SES (Kagan et al., 1976). This study did not report any significant differences between groups. Kagan et al (1976) suggest that maturational differences may effect child attachment more so than experiential differences. Ricciuti

(1974) conducted a longitudinal study at the Cornell Experimental Nursery that indicated discriminate attachment can be developed between children and their mothers. The collective body of data from these studies indicates that there is little evidence to support the claim that day care causes a disruption between mother and child bonding. This lack of evidence does not however mean that day care is not correlated with disruptive bonding, but that additional evidence is needed for further assessment.

Day care's effect on the family has not been studied in the past very extensively in regard to changes within the family unit as a result of the care arrangements or changes noted socially or within the community. Most of the research had focused on the child who is experiencing the care and how it directly affects him or her. In a study examining the effect of maternal employment and median incomes of families by Elliott (1973), as part of a larger study by Peters (1973), compared the rates of maternal employment with satisfaction in marital, employment, and day care choices in families that have their children enrolled in day care versus waiting list families. It was noted that satisfaction with day care arrangements were correlated with marital and employment satisfaction (Meyers, 1973; Harrel, 1973; Harrel & Ridley, 1975).

Further research studies that were performed in the late 1980's indicate a change in the findings (Belsky 1988). Research conducted by Belsky and others suggest that emotional and social well being of infants who are placed in daycare before one year of age are at greater risk of being vulnerable to problems bonding with their mothers (Belsky, 1978; Clarke-Stewart, 1989; Lamb Sternberg, & Prodromidis, 1992).

Gender differences may as well be affected by children's exposure to their mothers working status. Willetts-Bloom and Nock (1994) explored the influence of

maternal employment on gender attitudes of both men and women. Researchers purported that more egalitarian gender attitudes would be held by men and women whose mothers had worked during their childhood. In a previous study, Starrels (1992) found that adolescent females who had working mothers expressed greater approval for maternal employment than those females whose mothers had not worked outside the home. Similar findings were reported by male respondents in a study performed by Herzog, Bachman, & Johnson (1983).

Additionally, Willetts-Bloom and Nock (1994) were interested in determining whether certain variables impacted children's view of maternal employment, such as the age of the respondent when his/her mother began working. Researchers hypothesized that respondents whose mothers began working at a young age would be more likely to approve of maternal employment and would subsequently have more liberal conceptions of acceptable gender roles.

Surveys designed to assess respondents' opinions toward maternal employment and conceptions of ideal gender roles were distributed to a sample of 500 undergraduate students. A total of 242 cases were obtained, consisting of 111 male respondents and 131 female respondents.

Results indicated that 98.7% of the total population sampled expressed approval for a married woman with no children to work outside the home. However, the approval rating dropped to 57.4% when respondents were asked to indicate their approval for a mother with preschool age children to work outside the home.

Additionally, a multiple (OLS) regression analysis was performed which revealed that the older a respondent was when their mother began working, the higher their

disapproval rating was for maternal employment in general. Consequently, researchers found the age variable to be the strongest predictor of respondents' feelings toward gender roles.

Willetts-Bloom and Nock (1994) indicated that their study was limited in its inability to examine the father's perceptions about maternal employment and gender roles, as it is possible that a father's disapproval of his wife's career may have carried over into the ideology of his children, and subsequently may have impacted their views of gender-acceptable behavior.

The social, cultural, and family environment in which children are raised may also affect children's perceptions of adulthood and maternal employment. Jackson and Tein (1998) investigated adolescents' personal constructions of adulthood as a function of various family background characteristics. Researchers note that the way adolescents conceptualize adulthood is culturally relative and may have implications for the way adolescents perceive their society. Subsequently, such attitudes may affect adolescents' social constructs of the appropriate roles for men and women.

In recent years, a societal shift toward maternal employment has altered the traditional stereotypical gender roles in the eyes of adolescents. This shift in societal values appears to have influenced adolescents' perception of adult and gender relationships and identities. Thus, researchers were interested in determining how this variable has altered adolescent perceptions.

Participants in the study were junior and senior high school students from a small, midwestern public school. After securing permission from their parents, participants were administered an adult role questionnaire that was aimed at assessing their family

backgrounds, as well as their self-constructions of adulthood. Exploratory factor analysis, as well as an analysis of variance, was used in analyzing the data.

Jackson and Tien (1988) found that each participant's age, gender, career orientation, and maternal employment were found to influence their conceptualization of the role of "adult." Additionally, Jackson and Tien (1998) reported that older adolescent boys cited more negative effects of career on men and women in families, in comparison to older adolescent girls, and younger boys. Furthermore, older adolescent males were found to have a more traditional view of appropriate gender roles. They viewed an employed woman as being less attractive, less desirable, and less likely to be married.

This differed significantly from females, who were found to be more likely to disagree with possible negative aspects of maternal employment. In general, girls held more egalitarian attitudes toward gender behavior than boys. Moreover, an age interaction appeared to exist, as older males were revealed to be more traditionally oriented than both younger males and females. Thus, the findings of this study suggest that the increasing rate of maternal employment in the U.S. has influenced adolescent's perception of adulthood and their conception of appropriate family roles.

The approach parents take to working and juggling family responsibilities can be different in dual career, versus single paycheck families, and these differences may affect children's attitudes toward their mothers who have careers outside the home versus those who are full-time caregivers. Galinksy (1999), worked to discover ways in which families could go about both work and family commitments. The study focused on the importance of prioritizing family involvement in dual income families. It also investigated the ideas and opinions the children had pertaining to their parent's careers.

Lewis, Tudball and Hand (2001) point out that Galinsky's (1999) methods preclude conclusions about actual outcomes for the children studied. No measures of children's achievement on later successes were obtained.

The study was conducted in Melbourne, AU with 69 parents and their 71 children. The parents were asked numerous questions, including their employment decisions and how they were influenced by their family responsibilities, and the amount and nature of the time they spent with their children. Most of the parents surveyed worked an average of 35 hours per week, with the ratio varying from 20 hours per week to 50 hours per week. Children were surveyed on a wide variety of questions, though the focus was on how they felt about their parents working, and whether they felt as though their parents' work responsibilities effected their feelings of closeness as a family.

Results showed that most children in this study who came from dual income families reported their time spent with their parents was less than adequate. The girls surveyed reported that witnessing their mothers working provided inspiration and they were more likely to desire to be career women also. Interestingly, however, they reported that one thing they would change would be that they, as parents, would focus on more quality time spent with their future children. From the study, parents have discovered that more time needs to be spent with their children, and that while having a job may be beneficial, and in some cases necessary, they have concurred on some means of change. Some methods included the change of jobs, a cutback on hours, and taking advantage of flexible work schedules. Others were related to the act of parenting itself and managing home life.

Cook, Herman, Phillips, and Settersten Jr. (2002) researched how various components, such as neighborhoods, families, friends, and schools, mutually contribute to positive aspects of adolescence. The study was conducted using 22,314 suburban seventh grade students from twenty-three suburban schools in the Washington DC area. Attitude questionnaires were used, as well as information provided by the school systems.

Results indicated a positive correlation at the individual level among the four previously mentioned variables. Highest correlations were found among the family and friend variables, equating to a positive attitude and change in adolescence, whereas lower correlations for the same aspect were found in the areas of neighborhoods and school systems/quality.

The results also suggest that children raised in homes with strict parenting methods and a strong parent-child communication system often have more reliable and stable friendships in their adolescent years, are less likely to disrespect or disregard law enforcement in their youth, and are more likely to be motivated towards long term goals, rather than short term satisfaction. It was also shown that the effect of all four aspects jointly working together lead to adolescents maintaining a more stable, healthy, and happy childhood experience.

Dunifon and Kowaleski-Jones (2002) researched the correlations between single parent and co-habitational homes and their effects on children based upon their race. The study was conducted with children between the ages of ten and fourteen years of age, through the years of 1988-1998. It is important to note that many of these children polled were born to mothers who had the children at a young age between the ages of fourteen

and twenty-one years old. Achievement tests were used as scoring and testing methods, and samples were taken from both national and representational samples.

Results indicated that African American children were statistically less likely to be raised in a co-habitational home, as compared with their European American, white counterparts. African American children, versus European American children, were more likely to score higher on the delinquency tests, as well as lower in general mathematical aptitude tests. Being raised in a single parent home was also more likely to lead to periods of delinquency among European American children, whereas no significant findings were correlated among the same measures of African American children. It was suggested that possible reasons for this correlation was due to the fact that in the United States, African American children are much more likely to be raised in single family homes, therefore they are more accepting and used to the cycle. It was also found that maternal warmth had no effects on rates of delinquency for African Americans.

The degree of social support available to mothers, especially in poor neighborhoods may also have an effect on children's family environments. Ceballo and McLoyd (2002) examined the correlation between two kinds of parental behavior (nurturing and punitive), and social support. Past studies have examined various influences on parenting techniques. Hernandez, (1997) reported a trend that has been increasing since the 1970's of African American children being raised by mothers who have never been married. Poverty has increased in certain urban and rural areas in the U.S. resulting from demographic changes in these areas of the U.S. (Wilson, 1987). Crime, insufficient school facilities, inadequate medical care, and low employment opportunities exist to a high degree in many of these areas.

Ceballo and McLoyd (2002) examine the connection between stressful environmental situations, what impact those situations have on parenting techniques used, and what degree of social support the mothers have. Single mothers living at or below poverty level face a greater likelihood of encountering intimidating life events that are out of their realm of control (Belle, 1990; Brown, Bhrolchain, & Harris, 1975; Demo & Acock, 1996; McLoyd, 1990; McLoyd & Wilson, 1990; Weinraub & Wolf, 1983). They tend to have lower self-esteem and many are depressed (Demo & Acock, 1996). These mothers also tend to have less social contacts available to them and spend more of their time isolated from social environments (Pearlin & Johnson, 1977, Weinraub & Wolf, 1983).

Past studies have indicated that economically disadvantaged parents who are under extreme stress, more frequently resort to physical punishment and overly firm demands for obedience without much explanation for the punishment or demands (Halpern, 1990; Hanson, McLanahan, & Thompson, 1997; Kelley, Power, &Wimbush, 1992; McLoyd, 1990, 1998). As Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, and Dornbusch (1991) noted, authoritative parenting, where parents are firm but loving, supportive, and effectively communicate with their children tend to have children who perform better academically and are more emotionally secure and socially comfortable than children of either authoritarian or permissive parenting. In addition, it had been suggested that mothers with strong social networks tend to utilize the skills that are associated with authoritative parenting (McLoyd, 1990 Weinraub & Wolf, 1983).

In a study performed by Klebanov, Brooks-Gunn & Ducan (1994), a sample of 895 families were observed and analyzed in the Infant Health and Development Program.

Data from this study indicate that mothers living in poverty were more negatively affected and demonstrated loving behaviors with their children less frequently. Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2000) suggest a mother's access to social interaction and supportive relationships may indirectly be one of the main influences on children's well being. Ceballo and McLoyd hypothesize in their research that higher degrees of social support will be correlated with more nurturing and less punitive parenting.

In the study by Ceballo and MCLoyd (2002) a sampling of 262 single parent African American mothers and their children, 7th and 8th grade students, were gathered. Flint, Michigan was chosen as the location for this study, based on an FBI report indicating Flint as among the top twenty cities in the nation, as far as crime rate is concerned (Smith & Doran, 1992). Interviews were conducted in the homes of the mothers and children on the variables of self-reported neighborhood quality, availability of emotional support, maternal nurturance and punishment as well as control variables to eliminate possible biases of family type constructs.

Hierarchical linear regression analysis was utilized and the results indicated that mothers with more social support demonstrated nurturing parenting skills significantly more frequently with their children than those with less social support. This correlation between nurturance and parenting skills was significantly related to neighborhood quality. There was a high degree of reported depression among the mothers in this sample. The mothers reporting greater depression tended to utilize punitive techniques of punishment more frequently, and reported having less availability of social networks. Additionally, these mothers had more children then those mothers who had lower depression scores.

The study by Ceballo & McLoyd (2002) concurs with some of the previous research and lends valuable new information pertaining to the interactions between social availability and parenting, but, with certain limitations. The shortcomings of this research include the use of self-reporting, cross-sectional analysis, and median split of neighborhood quality into better and worse groups. Causality cannot be proved among the relationships shown in the results. The study used convenience sampling in gathering data, however, the sample chosen did in fact represent the poverty stricken, African American families the hypothesis was based on. Linear statistic methods such as hierarchical regressions are not the best choice for analyzing data pertaining to subjects from the same geographic location. The results of this study by Ceballo & McLoyd (2002) however, do correlate with results from similar studies and do lend to possible explanation or suggestion of the relationship between mothers social support and parenting skills used.

The current study seeks to examine the effects of gender differences and type of school on the attitudes of middle school students toward maternal employment. We hypothesize that differences will emerge between males and females in attitudes toward their mothers working and that differences between types of school will exist with significant differences in approval of maternal employment coming from urban school students.

Method

Subjects:

The subjects used in this study were 76 junior high school students. The sample consisted of 24 males and 14 females from a sixth grade suburban classroom at Cinnaminson Middle School, Cinnaminson, New Jersey and 14 males and 24 females from a sixth grade urban classroom at Rush Middle School, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The subjects ranged in age from 10 to 12 years old. Permission was obtained from parents for the students to participate in the study.

Procedure:

The packet used in this study was handed out to subjects in the sixth grade classroom. Subjects were asked to fill out the packet in its entirety. Ample time was given to the students to complete the questionnaire packet. The packet used in this study consisted of five different parts.

In part one, subjects were asked to provide demographic information and to answer questions concerning their career and family expectations. These questions required subjects to disclose information concerning their expectations about family plans, job type, job characteristics, and work preference based on the age of their youngest child. Subjects were also asked 10 questions concerning their attitudes toward their mother and father. These questions required subjects to indicate their degree of agreement with each statement on a 4 point Likert scale.

Part two of the packet was made up of the BACMEC questionnaire (Greenberger et al., 1988). The BACMEC is a 24-item scale developed to measure Beliefs About the Consequences of Maternal Employment for Children. The BACMEC included beliefs about both benefits (13 items) and costs (11 items). Studies of five samples (n=375) have

demonstrated that the total BACMEC scale and its subscales are highly reliable and have good convergent, divergent, and concurrent validity (Greenberger et al., 1988).

In part three of the packet, subjects were asked to disclose information about their mother's work status at each stage of development. The stages of development were infancy (birth to 1 1/2 years old), preschool (2 to 5 years old), childhood (6 to 12 years old), and adolescence (13 to 18 years old). The subjects were asked to report whether their mothers were employed part-time, fulltime, or not employed outside the home during each stage of development. Subjects also disclosed information about their mother's job, indicating whether it was professional, white collar, or blue collar work. Subjects were also asked to indicate whether or not they had been raised in a single parent household.

Part four of the packet consisted of the CASR, the Revised Childhood Appraisal Scale (Chambliss, Owens, & Carr, 1991). The CASR is a 13-item questionnaire designed to measure the subject's perception of the consequences of their mother's work status. The subjects were asked to rate each item on a scale from 1 to 4 depending on how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each statement. The statements permitted subjects to indicate if they felt their lives would have been different if their mother's work status had been different when they were growing up. This allowed an assessment of the perceived impact of fulltime and part-time maternal employment, as well as unemployment.

The final part of the packet was the 10-item Rosenberg Self Concept Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), which was used to measure self-esteem. Subjects were asked to indicate on a 4 point Likert format scale how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each

statement (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree). The statements assessed students' perceptions of self worth and competence.

Results

Directionally adjusted responses to the BACMEC were totaled for each participant to create two summary measures of attitudes toward maternal employment, one assessing perceived benefits and another assessing perceived costs. Summary scores indicating participants' evaluations of the quality of their current relationship with their mother were computed by adding the directionally adjusted items on the maternal relationship scale. Parallel summary scores were calculated for ratings of relationships with father. Directionally adjusted items from the Rosenberg Self Concept Scale were similarly totaled to create a summary self-esteem score for each student. Students who reported a history of having lived in a single parent household were excluded from subsequent analyses.

Suburban versus Urban Schools

Independent samples t-tests were used to compare participants from urban and suburban middle schools on the measures of cost, benefit, relationship with mother/father, and self esteem. Significant differences were found; urban students reported significantly higher ratings of the benefits of maternal employment than suburban students (suburban $x=49.68$, $s.d.=10.78$, $n=56$; versus urban= $x=54.10$, $s.d.=8.34$, $n=52$ $t=2.37$, $df=106$, $p<.05$).

Independent samples t-tests were used to compare how students rated their relationship with their fathers. Suburban students rated the quality of their relationships

with their fathers significantly higher than urban students (urban x=9.19, s.d.=3.66,n=52 versus suburban x=11.28, s.d.=2.62, n=57; t=3.39, df=91.64, p<.001).

Sex

Independent samples t-tests were used to compare male and female participants on the measures of cost and benefits of maternal employment. Significant differences emerged on the perceived benefits scale; female students gave significantly higher ratings of the benefits of maternal employment than male students (male x=48.45,s.d.=10.32, n=53 versus female x=55.03, s.d.=8.34, n=55; t=3.65, df=106, p<.001).

Additionally, significant gender differences also emerged on the ratings of the quality of relationships with mothers. Female students rated the quality of their maternal relationships higher than their male counterparts. (male x=10.34,s.d.=2.08,n=53 versus female x=11.31, s.d.=2.67, n=55; t=2.10, df=106, p<.05). No significant gender differences were found in students' ratings of the quality of their relationships with their fathers.

Similarly, independent t-tests revealed no significant sex differences in perceived costs of maternal employment. Finally, the data indicated that no significant gender differences existed in student's self esteem.

Discussion

The significant differences found among urban students and suburban students in terms of urban students reporting significantly higher ratings of the benefits of maternal employment, may be attributed to economic hardship placed upon urban families that require urban mothers to be employed. Maternal employment may help relieve some of the financial stress experienced by these families and therefore create a more comfortable

family environment. The children may notice that their parents fight less and do not reprimand them as much when financial pressures are lessened. Their family's standard of living may be increased when their mothers are employed and the children may benefit from the extra money by being able to participate in activities that cost money and buy items that their families could not otherwise afford.

When their mothers are not working, however, the family may be subjected to a strict budget, and consequently the children may be required to forego desired activities and tangible items they desire. Differences in attitude toward maternal employment may also be a result of differences in urban versus suburban community value systems in regard to their perceptions of appropriate gender roles.

Suburban students as compared to their urban counterparts rated the quality of relationships with fathers significantly higher. This may be because suburban fathers may have more predictable work schedules and are able to plan time with their children and be more involved in their daily lives. Suburban families may also be more involved in community interactions and live in housing developments that involve other families with children. By design these families may engage in more social interaction, with their children, as well as with others in their neighborhood.

Urban fathers however, may not have steady employment and their schedules may be erratic. Due to the increased hourly demands and decreased flexibility in daily planning placed upon urban fathers, who traditionally work in blue-collar fields, the quality of their relationship with their children may diminish.

The results indicating that female students gave significantly higher ratings of the benefits of maternal employment than male students, could be the result of a collection of

variables. The females in this study may realize that they directly could be in the situation of having children and wanting to work. The males however, would only ever be indirectly affected, as they will never themselves be mothers who are or are not employed. If their mothers worked, these females may have been influenced by their mothers' positive attitude toward working. Their mothers could provide successful role models of career women and mothers paving the way for their daughters to envision the possibility for themselves. It could also be that their mothers encourage independent and goal oriented daughters who strive to support themselves.

Consequently, some husbands may resent their wives' work status, especially if their wives are involved in careers with more prestige than they have. Fathers may thereby indirectly discourage their sons from viewing maternal employment in a positive way. Male children could detect disapproval in comments made by their fathers indicating negative feeling toward maternal employment. These male children may look to their fathers to fulfill their image of a role model and his attitudes and beliefs may be very important. Additionally, males may feel the need to separate from their mothers in order to establish independence whereas females tend to mature and develop nurturing relationships as well as independence. Additionally, mothers who work may in some ways provide a stronger role model of independence and self-reliance to their female children, than mothers who do not work outside the home.

The results of this study, however, are not conclusive and are only designed to contribute to the information gathered from past researchers on the issue of maternal employment. The shortcomings of this research are the use of self-report questionnaires and convenience sampling, which hinders the strength of generalizability to the

population of middle school students of both urban and suburban school settings. The inclusion of both urban and suburban students in our sample, however, does help compensate somewhat for this deficiency.

Further research that examines the attitudes toward maternal employment and involves a larger, more representative sample of middle school students from different cities and rural neighborhoods nationwide would greatly increase the generalizability to the population of middle school children in America. Additional studies could analyze attitude differences crossculturally with participants from various ethnic backgrounds both living in America and differences observed among other countries. Statistical information based on the percentage of the population of mothers employed in each area could be collected and analyzed in these areas where samples are gathered. This information could be compared and analyzed in conjunction with attitudes middle school children have toward their mothers' working or not working based on possible correlations with societal influences.

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